



**Morning Alert - Tuesday, January 24, 2017**

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## **HEADLINES**

### **Morning news**

NHK gave top play to a report on heavy snowfall in the Chugoku and Kinki regions. All commercial networks led with reports that actor Hiroki Matsukata has died at the age of 74.

All national dailies other than Sankei gave top play to reports on a government panel report recommending one-time legislation allowing the Emperor to abdicate. Sankei led with a report on President Trump's remark that Japan's auto trade with the U.S. is "not fair."

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Trump criticizes Japan over auto trade**

Most papers front-paged reports saying that President Trump criticized Japan's auto trade with the U.S. as "not fair" by saying that Japan is making it impossible for the United States to sell its cars in Japan while selling hundreds of thousands of Japanese vehicles in America. The President made this remark during a meeting with business leaders on Monday. Yomiuri wrote that this was the first time for President Trump to criticize Japan by name. Sankei wrote that this is unilateral criticism that ignores consumers' needs in each country, and the U.S. is stepping up its protectionist stance. The paper added that the outlook for the Japanese economy is uncertain because it remains to be seen when a meeting between President Trump and Prime Minister will be arranged.

In a related development, the papers reported on Prime Minister Abe's remarks at a Diet session on Monday, during which expressed his eagerness to hold talks with President Trump as soon as possible to discuss U.S.-Japan relations on the economic front and other issues.

### **Trump's plan to review NAFTA creates stir among Japanese manufacturers**

Mainichi wrote that President Trump's remarks indicating the possibility of the U.S. reviewing NAFTA has created a stir among Japanese manufacturers that have production bases in Mexico. Many Japanese firms have established production bases in Mexico since NAFTA's launch in 1994, and a total of 957 companies, including Toyota, Nissan, Honda, and Mazda, had assembly plants in Mexico as of 2015. These automakers produce more than 1.3 million cars in Mexico annually, and 70 to 80% of them are sold in North America. Keidanren Chairman Sakakibara stated during a regular news conference on Monday that a review of NAFTA would probably have a significant impact on Japanese businesses that are making major investments in Mexico.

### **Japanese, Australian leaders discuss TPP**

Most papers wrote that Prime Minister Abe and his Australian counterpart Turnbull spoke over the phone on Monday and confirmed the importance of free trade. The papers speculated the two leaders held the teleconference in response to President Trump's official announcement of the United States' withdrawal from the TPP. The paper also conjectured that Abe and Turnbull discussed the possibility of implementing the TPP agreement without the participation of the U.S.

### **ROK acting president comments on comfort woman statue in Busan**

Several papers wrote that South Korea's Acting President and Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn commented on the comfort woman statue in Busan during a news conference on Monday. The papers quoted Hwang as saying: "We have been discussing the matter with Japan through various channels. We need more time and will make efforts to overcome the issue. Although the statue was installed by a private group, the government has a great deal of interest in the issue. It is difficult for the government to instruct the group to take specific actions, but it is necessary for the government to use wisdom in resolving the issue."

## **SECURITY**

### **Okinawa vice governor in charge of negotiations on Futenma relocation resigns**

All papers wrote that Okinawa Governor Onaga said on Monday that he has accepted the resignation of Vice Governor Ageda following allegations that he asked the prefectural board of education to hire his acquaintances as public school teachers in 2015. Although Ageda has denied the allegations, he decided to step down to take responsibility for "causing confusion in the management of the prefectural government." The papers wrote that Ageda's resignation will deal a blow to Onaga and that the Abe administration will closely monitor whether his departure will affect its negotiations with the prefecture on Futenma relocation because Ageda has served as a middleman between Onaga and Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga. A Kantei official was quoted as saying that Ageda's resignation is regrettable because "he is a man who keeps his word." A senior

official at the Defense Ministry's Okinawa Bureau expressed concern that Tokyo may lose contact with Okinawa following Ageda's resignation.

## **SOCIETY**

### **Government panel recommends one-time legislation allowing Emperor to abdicate**

Yomiuri and all other papers reported on points of discussion released on Monday by a government advisory panel studying the possible abdication of Emperor Akihito. The panel recommended that legislation on abdication apply only to the current Emperor. However, it stopped short of clarifying what kind of legislative approach would be desirable to pave the way for the Emperor's abdication, including whether to enact special legislation or revise the Imperial House Law, which does not contain a clause on abdication.

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